

Senior Airman Nathan was a 2004 graduate of Central High School in Macon, Georgia. His strong sense of patriotism, honor, and commitment to excellence led him to proudly enlist in the United States Air Force. He planned to resume his studies at Fort Valley State College and University, where he pursued a degree in Criminal Justice prior to his enlistment in 2005.

Madam Speaker, on June 1, 2008, the 48th Fighter Wing dedicated a Vehicle Entry Gate at RAF Lakenheath in honor of Senior Airman Nathan. The plaque which commemorated the event reads, "This gate is memorialized in the name of Senior Airman Jason D. Nathan who was assigned to the 48th Security Squadron, 48th Fighter Wing, RAF Lakenheath, England. Senior Airman Nathan was mortally wounded by an improvised explosive device on 23 June 2007 while on a combat patrol in Tikrit, Iraq in support of Operation IRAQI FREEDOM. He gave his life providing courageous support to his squad while protecting the people of Iraq in their pursuit of freedom from oppression and terror. Senior Airman Nathan's heroic actions and unselfish dedication upheld the highest traditions of the Security Forces career field and the United States Air Force." Senior Airman Nathan was also honored at ceremonies in Iraq and in Afghanistan.

Senior Airman Nathan's selfless service to his country, his willingness to pay the ultimate sacrifice so that all of us can enjoy the fruits of liberty, his desire to see the Iraqi people live in a free and democratic society, are all attributes of an outstanding young American to whom we all owe a great debt of gratitude and respect.

Madam Speaker, I am confident my colleagues will join me in recognizing the heroism, patriotism and fidelity of Senior Airman Jason Dorian Nathan.

ON THE PASSING OF THEO BAARS, JR.

HON. JEFF MILLER

OF FLORIDA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, it is with great sadness that I rise today to recognize the passing of Theo Baars, Jr. Over several decades, Theo helped shape the Pensacola community and contributed greatly to making this area a great place for people to live and work.

During the 1960s, 1970s and beyond, Theo played a great role in bringing some important businesses and services to the Pensacola area, located in my district in Northwest Florida. Through his active work in the real estate community, several buildings that are now considered landmarks were built, including Sacred Heart Hospital and Pensacola Junior College. Theo was instrumental in locating these two landmarks and numerous other buildings in areas where they would serve the greatest amount of people.

Theo's projects not only benefitted great numbers of people but also the community as a whole. From health care to higher learning to consumer goods to state parks, he made sure that development was not done for the sake of development, but to directly benefit those living and working in the area. His dedi-

cation to the community's well-being extended into his involvement with several civic organizations as well, including the Pensacola Bay Area Chamber of Commerce, the National Naval Aviation Museum and his role as a founding member of Junior Achievement.

Madam Speaker, Northwest Florida will long remember the legacy of Theo Baars, Jr. His influence in the area will not only be seen but also felt on a daily basis as people travel through the area. My thoughts and prayers are with Marge, his wife of 30 years, and all his family. We will miss this man who helped make our world a better place.

RECOGNIZING IAN GIBSON OF VIRGINIA BEACH

HON. THELMA D. DRAKE

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mrs. DRAKE. Madam Speaker, I rise to recognize the outstanding achievements of Ian Gibson of Virginia Beach, and to commend him on becoming a Congressional Award Gold Medalist. This recognition by the United States Congress is the highest honor bestowed upon America's youth. It serves as a testament to Ian's strength of character and commitment to our national values of dedication to public service and the cherished qualities of personal growth, initiative, and achievement, all of which are cornerstones of the Congressional Award.

Ian's volunteer efforts are tremendous, speaking very highly of him and his level of commitment to the community and to public service. Ian completed over 600 hours of Voluntary Public Service and earned the rank of Eagle Scout, working with Strawbridge Elementary School to provide school supplies to orphans in Bolivia and Russia, and 25 local children. In addition, he continues to be active within the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) Tidewater Council, serving as Junior Assistant BSA Tidewater Council Venturing Leadership Award, and participating in the 2007 National OA Leadership and Conservation Summit at Indiana University.

Ian has devoted time and energy to excellence in the sports of baseball and football, honing his speed and endurance, and earning a selection as First Colonial High School's "Male Student Athlete of the Week." By maintaining his own physical well-being, he has balanced the challenges of public service with his own personal welfare and developed a well-rounded persona.

Ian has become a role model, not only for those young cub scouts he assists and tee-ball players he coaches, but also for the large community around him. Upon receiving the Congressional Medal, he joins a most elite group of our nation's youth who have set and achieved this very commendable goal. I am certain Ian's incredible accomplishments, dedication to service, and evident leadership talents will continue to speak highly of him, as they do now.

HONORING PADMA VELIGATI

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Padma Veligati of St. Joseph, Missouri. Padma is active in the community through work and in her spare time and she has been chosen to receive the YWCA Women of Excellence Award for Woman in Volunteerism.

When asked what Padma Veligati gives back to her community through volunteerism, answers vary, but the themes are the same. She is compassionate, committed, and her focus is always on those she serves. Padma has spent one day off each month for the past three years volunteering at the city's Social Service Board whose mission is to serve the health needs of those in poverty, lacking health insurance and not covered by Medicare or Medicaid. She takes on the most difficult gynecological cases, and her colleagues say that she has saved the lives of many women. Having grown up in a third-world country, Padma feels strongly about the lack of availability of medical services to certain segments of the population, especially considering how wealthy our nation is compared to the rest of the world.

Padma was recently admitted into the Masters in Public Health program at the Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. While Padma will have to give up volunteering in the short-term in order to balance her studies and a busy OB/GYN practice, her new degree will help her achieve her goal of working in international public health and impacting even more women in need.

Madam Speaker, I proudly ask you to join me in recognizing Padma Veligati. She has made an amazing impact on countless individuals in the St. Joseph Community. I am honored to represent her in the United States Congress.

IN ANTICIPATION OF VIETNAMESE PRIME MINISTER NGUYEN'S OFFICIAL VISIT TO THE U.S.

HON. FRANK R. WOLF

OF VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. WOLF. Madam Speaker, next Tuesday, Vietnamese Prime Minister Nguyen will visit the White House. I sincerely hope that the President will seize this opportunity to be bold and make Vietnam's deplorable human rights record a point of focus. Any further cooperation between the U.S. and Vietnam should be contingent upon establishing benchmarks for improved human rights and increased religious freedom in Vietnam.

Vietnam's human rights record remains a disgrace despite its ascension to the World Trade Organization—a move that many believed would help liberalize the political as well as the economic situation. The citizens of Vietnam today remain unable to change their government. Last November, the government arrested and imprisoned two Vietnamese citizens and three foreign citizens for preparing

pamphlets which advocated democratic change in Vietnam. One of those five is an American citizen, Dr. Nguyen Quoc Quan, who continues to languish in prison despite numerous appeals by the U.S. government for his release.

According to the Human Rights Watch, since mid-2006, 40 peaceful activists have been arrested. They join the over 350 religious and political prisoners sentenced since 2001. Vietnam it not progressing, it is regressing. Government officials continue to harass religious groups.

Religious institutions are required to apply for permits; but many of these applications are ignored or denied leaving congregations without protection of the law and vulnerable to abuse. In the Central Highlands, provincial officials have been trained to deny medical, educational, financial and other government services to religious families. Local police beat a Protestant man in Phu Yen province for refusing to renounce his religion; he later died of internal injuries from the beating. The activities of the United Buddhist Church of Vietnam are actively banned.

I was disappointed when the State Department removed Vietnam from its list of Countries of Particular Concern in regard to religious freedom. I have asked the State Department that Vietnam be added back onto the list.

Trafficking in persons also remains a major problem. Vietnam was listed as a Tier Two country in the State Department's 2008 Trafficking in Persons Report. Poor women and teenage girls in rural areas remain most at risk of being trafficked, primarily for sexual exploitation.

I was very disappointed when I read of an exchange U.S. Ambassador to Vietnam Michael Michalak had with journalists and he only mentioned human rights one time. I have written to Ambassador Michalak several times and urged him to make promoting human rights his top priority.

The U.S. Embassy in Vietnam should be an island of freedom and work to promote human liberty and dignity. Regrettably, it is not. Several of my colleagues have joined me in writing Ambassador Michalak and asking that he invite all Vietnamese dissidents to the U.S. Embassy in Hanoi on July 4—America's Independence Day. I look forward to his response.

I will continue speaking out for the Vietnamese people who want to see their government turn away from violence and repression, and embrace the universal principles of human rights and religious freedom.

RECOGNITION OF THE 145TH BIRTHDAY OF THE STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. RAHALL. Madam Speaker, I rise today in recognition of the 145th birthday of my home State, West Virginia.

The most violent conflict in the history of our Nation, the Civil War, gave America a new definition of freedom, strengthened the role of the Federal Government, and ultimately reconciled our fractured Union. For West Vir-

ginians, the 1861–1865 conflict remains significant for another reason: Virginia was rendered in two, east and west, and a new State, West Virginia, was born.

This June 20th marks the 145th birthday of the State of West Virginia. I ask all West Virginians—the hardest working, most hospitable, and most patriotic people in the United States—to join me in celebrating how far our State has come.

West Virginians have long known their uniqueness and celebrated it. As the only State to be formed by seceding from its parent State, West Virginia blazed a trail of independence of mind and spirit in a country that was tearing itself apart. West Virginia is the only State to achieve Statehood by the proclamation of a President on the provision that West Virginia would support the gradual abolishment of slavery in its newly formed constitution. On June 20, 1863, West Virginia became the 35th State.

On this West Virginia Day, I reflect upon the treasures of our State—truly one of the most beautiful in the Nation. With its majestic mountains, rolling hills, awesome gorges and rivers, picturesque towns, hospitable people, and a “wild and wonderful” atmosphere, I thank God for the opportunity to call it home.

Many historic figures have lived and traveled through the Mountain State on their way to shaping the course of our Nation's history. Daniel Boone settled and lived in present day Kanawha County. Stonewall Jackson, the stalwart Civil War general, was born in Clarksburg and Pearl S. Buck—Pulitzer Prize and Nobel Prize winning author was born in Hillsboro, Pocahontas County.

Many modern-day heroes and stars also hail from the hills of West Virginia. Jennifer Garner, who received a Golden Globe for her performances on ABC's hit television drama “Alias,” is a Charleston native. Chuck Yeager, who broke the sound barrier and has used his influence to promote scholarship and development opportunities for the State, was born in Myra. The mining town of Coalwood, in McDowell County is now world-renown as the home of Homer Hickam, best-selling author of Rocket Boys, upon which the award-winning 1999 motion picture “October Sky” was based.

In addition to celebrities, both historical and modern, West Virginia's elected leaders have brought vision and opportunity to our State. Most notable, Senator ROBERT C. BYRD, the “Big Daddy” of West Virginia politics, is the longest serving Senator in history and has secured billions of dollars for the future of our State. He remains a force to be reckoned with in the Senate with his longevity and leadership.

Home to an abundance of natural resources, West Virginia has helped feed and power our Nation. West Virginia's “Coal Keeps the Lights On.” Our agricultural industry provides dairy, poultry, and feed crops for our State and beyond. The lumber industry makes use of the bountiful forests that cover 75 percent of our beautiful terrain.

Lastly the greatest gift and most precious resource our State has nurtured are West Virginians themselves—honest, hard-working people who are very the lifeblood of our State. Today West Virginians thank the Lord for our bountiful blessings, bound together in loyalty and love for our State as we remind ourselves that, yes—John Denver was right, West Virginia is truly almost Heaven.

Happy Birthday West Virginia.

HONORING THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF SENATOR JOHNNY ISAKSON

HON. JOHN LEWIS

OF GEORGIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19, 2008

Mr. LEWIS of Georgia. Madam Speaker, today I rise to congratulate Senator JOHNNY ISAKSON as he honors our elders for their inspiration in our lives by honoring and remembering his own parents, Ed and Julia Isakson, at the 6th Annual Thanks Mom & Dad Celebration on June 20, 2008.

A loving son, Senator ISAKSON credits his parents for instilling in him his strong work ethic, his love of family and his respect for others. A good father in his own right, Senator ISAKSON's children credit him for teaching them through his example, not just words.

Senator ISAKSON has long championed the rights of older adults and supports programs and services that promote healthy living, employment services and other programs vital to both active and homebound older adults.

The Thanks Mom & Dad Fund® honors parents, grandparents and mentors by supporting programs and services for older adults, and each year asks someone in the community each year to honor their parents, grandparents or mentors. Senator ISAKSON was selected to honor his parents and is also being honored because he has inspired the lives of his children and so many others in the community.

I know well the power of his work in Georgia and here on Capitol Hill where he has demonstrated the ability to inspire members and staff alike to respond to the needs of the elderly.

I rise to honor Senator ISAKSON's contributions and to express my gratitude that he continues on in service on behalf of his constituents.

HONORING IRENE MOORE

HON. SAM GRAVES

OF MISSOURI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Thursday, June 19th, 2008

Mr. GRAVES. Madam Speaker, I proudly pause to recognize Irene Moore of Saint Joseph, Missouri. Irene is a student at Benton High School and she has been chosen to receive the YWCA Women of Excellence Future Leader Award.

Irene is an academic leader who has challenged herself with rigorous classes and ranks in the top 10 percent. She is the editor and a chief writer of the school newspaper and was business manager for two years, as well as Vice President of her junior class and President of the senior class. Irene was one of the founding members of Students Everywhere Encourage Diversity (SEED), a group that promotes respect and tolerance among students. As a 3-year member of the Fellowship for Christian Athletes, she has helped the group grow to as many as 15 students. She is on the FCA Leadership Crew and often prepares the lesson for the meeting. Her school honors